



**Untitled, CerModern**

November, 2014, Beril Kapusuz. This photo is taken at CerModern from the exhibition '*Bir Dünya Hikayesi - Une Histoire du Monde*' by Turkish artist Osman Dinç, <http://chronicle707.com/post/101834461403/>

# **simulating “cermodern” via photograph: an experiment on the virtual space “chronicle707”**

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*This study will be an inquiry into the interactions between [architectural] space and photography, which gets its inspiration from the authors' personal blog “chronicle707”, by introducing an experiment via photographs to simulate exhibitions. This paper will be derived from the shared posts on the blog about the exhibitions realized specifically at CerModern, which is the modern art center of Ankara –the capital city of Turkey. With an architectural perspective, photograph is not only an instrument of documentation or recording, but also a creative tool which produce alternative narratives of architectural space. Considering the theme exhibitions; “photographs” of a painting, photograph, sculpture etc. –as an artwork installed in– tries to recreate the physical / experienced exhibition space in the virtual medium / space of the blog. The photographic representations of the exhibition become a “simulation” (in Jean Baudrillard' terms) of both the artwork and the space as an entity. Therefore, the blog itself becomes a visual simulation. Since the potential of the temporary exhibitions serve for the blog to create multiple simulations, “CerModern” (the physical space) and “chronicle707” (the virtual space) are considered as experimental spaces. This paper will use a comparative approach addressing the published photographs on the virtual spaces of the blog and CerModern's official website. Referring to Walter Benjamin, an artwork loses its aura when it is transformed into a photographic image (reproduced) by disregarding its context. Rather than capturing only the artworks, the blog seeks to recreate the aura by (re)presenting the artworks together with the space they “exist”. The possibilities of recreating the aura will be discussed in this paper by analyzing the virtual space of chronicle707, which is itself a simulation*

**keywords** Architectural photograph, Architectural space, Exhibition, Physical space, Virtual space, Simulation

## introduction

The scope of this inquiry is the interactions between [architectural] space and photography through exhibitions. The authors' personal blog *chronicle707* is the pretext for this paper, which aims to present a simulation of experiences with the aid of [architectural] photographs. *Chronicle707* ([www.chronicle707.com](http://www.chronicle707.com)) is founded by two academic architects [Bengi Su Ertürkmen and Beril Kapusuz] who reside in the office n.707 at Gazi University Department of Architecture. This blog is a "digital chronicle" that is built upon the author's daily experiences displayed via architectural photographs taken from the exhibition spaces – museums, galleries, art centers– or an architectural building exhibited in the city itself. To accomplish this, the photographs displayed on the blog are instrumentalized, with which *chronicle707* manifests a virtual space by simulating buildings (as architectural artifacts) and art exhibitions. In this context, the blog consists of the simulations of both exhibitions of architecture and art.

This paper deals with the phenomenon of 'exhibition' as the intersecting medium of architecture and art; by means of exhibition architectural space and artwork are simultaneously exposed. In our case CerModern –the modern arts center of Ankara– is chosen as the physical architectural space. CerModern realized in 2010 is designed by Uygur Architects. The building is composed of the reconstruction of an industrial building –functioned as a warehouse for the trains– and a new extension. CerModern's main exhibition hall, which hosts the seminal temporary exhibitions, is located within the reconstructed part. However, in terms display method, the exhibition hall is designed with modern white-cube<sup>1</sup> tradition. Therefore, the exhibition space is organized with the 'white walls' as the identification mark of the white-cube. Due to its former function as a warehouse, it has an open plan layout suitable for flexible organization of the space and the exhibitions.

The discussions will be generated through the photographs taken from the temporary exhibitions realized at CerModern and shared on the *chronicle707*. These photographs initiate a tripartite simulation process of exhibitions: exhibition (1) de-tached, (2) re-produced and (3) re-exhibited. The first phase is the act of taking photographs; the second is the making compositions on the blog as separate posts for exhibitions and sharing them; the last phase is the assemblage of multiple exhibitions that creates a virtual exhibition space.

As a result of this process, the physical (exhibition) space of CerModern is translated into a 'virtual (exhibition) space'. Photographs that are given a "space" in the virtual space of *chronicle707*, are not the representatives of CerModern –hosting certain artists/artworks–. They capture temporal spatial situations created with/in exhibitions. Once becoming a simulation, temporary exhibitions of CerModern turn into permanent exhibitions of *chronicle707*.

## [architectural] photography and simulation

It has been eighty years since Walter Benjamin wrote *The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, and manifested the "loss of *aura*" together with the "rise of the photography: The *aura* of the artwork disappeared because art became reproducible. As it is defined by Benjamin, a work of art with its unique presence in space and time has this effect called *aura*, which calls for the idea of authenticity<sup>2</sup>. According to Benjamin, at the very moment an artwork is reproduced and appear as an image, object lose their authenticity while the images gains authority over the objects. In other words the artwork is "detached" from its meaning given by its author, and become present as an image in a new meaning given by the reader of it. Accordingly, the loss of *aura* "brings the work of art into distinct life-situation of the reader, viewer or listener"<sup>3</sup>. The detachment causes a disconnection from the artworks's former uses and artwork becomes a part of new combinations established by the reader, which then makes the reader the author.

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Douglas Crimp, an art critic whose seminal critical writings on the museum and the status of photography in the art world, is also influenced by the works of Benjamin. Crimp acknowledges Benjamin's loss of *aura* and “the appearance of photographs and photomechanically produced media in the art world”<sup>4</sup>. However, Crimp's “acceptance of photography as a significant expressive medium in art foreclosed or at least disrupted the discourse of modernism”<sup>5</sup> calls for the postmodernist approach to photography, which seeks to create its own authors and meanings owning the images of auro-less objects. Crimp focuses on the contemporary art practices of 1960's and onward, underlining the creation of meaning. According to the author, “meaning is made a function of the work's relationship to its site of exhibition”<sup>6</sup>. So to speak, Crimp draws attention to the space specific to the exhibition, and highlights the changing positions of artist-subject and the spectator-subject. Spectator as the subject is the one who produces meaning in relation to exhibition space and how artwork engages with the space it is installed in.

In parallel with the arguments mentioned above, photographer as a spectator subject also becomes an author of the post-modern discourse. There is a common conception of photography in two different aspects; first as an objective tool and second as an interpretative tool (which is embraced by the post-modern approach). Realistic reading of photography as a mechanical process asserts that “photography selects and transforms a fragment of the visual continuum into a new frame” which makes a reduction of the creative act of selection<sup>7</sup>. In this regards the photograph as an image acts as solely a record/document of the original object in the photograph. So to speak, the image is the object itself, avoiding meanings other than the object presents.

While on the other hand, semiotic conception of the photography, involves the meaning-making process, thus avoids the reading of the photograph as reflections of reality while asking for “interpretation”. The interpretation comes with the framing choice of the photographer, which gives the image its authority. Here, framing becomes a significant issue in terms of the mechanical process. Despite the status of the photograph being a reflection, frame as a technical manipulation also resides inevitably in the interpretative act of the photographer. Susan Sontag, who's celebrated writings on photography, should be referred here: “Although there is a sense in which the camera does indeed capture reality, not just interpret it, photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are”<sup>8</sup>. Thereupon, “the photographic image signifies itself and something else –it becomes a signifier (remotivated) within the system of a new frame”<sup>9</sup>.

John Berger –the art critic also known for his television series and the associate book on the study of images *Ways of Seeing*, partly derived from Benjamin's work– suggests in every photograph underlies a “way of seeing”, a chosen view through infinite possibilities of views<sup>10</sup>. Hence, defining photograph as “architectural” requires an “architectural way of seeing”. Instrumentalizing photograph as an interpretative tool, makes the photograph a signifier of a new architectural space beyond the physical space it frames; architectural photograph itself creates a new “reality” constructing a new narration out of/other than it. In an age of images in a constant state of flux, it would be necessary to re-visit Jean Baudrillard' post-modern simulation<sup>11</sup>, “whose genealogy in part is built upon Benjamin's account of the transformation of art by visual media involving ‘mechanical production’<sup>12</sup>. Simulation in Baudrillard's terms is in counterparts with representation, which “stems from the principle of the equivalence of the sign and of the real” in contrast with the simulation's negation of the sign as value<sup>13</sup>. Baudrillard's simulation is a reality in itself, making the photographic image manifesting its meaning on its own right. “In a world in which there are only simulations, or which the form of the simulacrum predominates, the world itself is a copy of a copy and the very notions of authenticity and truth lose their reference point”. In other words, photographs having created the authenticity in them, are detached from their origins.



To relate it with the architectural photograph, the physical architectural space that the photographer frames creates a simulation via medium of photography. The architectural photograph, detached from its tectonic existence becomes a new spatial narration. The space framed and fixed on the photograph, is no longer a representation of the captured architectural space, but constructs its own reality. Accordingly, making photographic simulations (with an architectural seeing) of exhibitions involves the interpretation of the artwork together with the architectural space in a way that specific exhibition juxtaposes them. At this point, it should be noted that the possibilities of “re-creation of *aura*” –through the presence of an artwork in its spatial context specific to an exhibition– will be questioned in this paper and photograph will be the tool to create new meanings out of these unique instants.

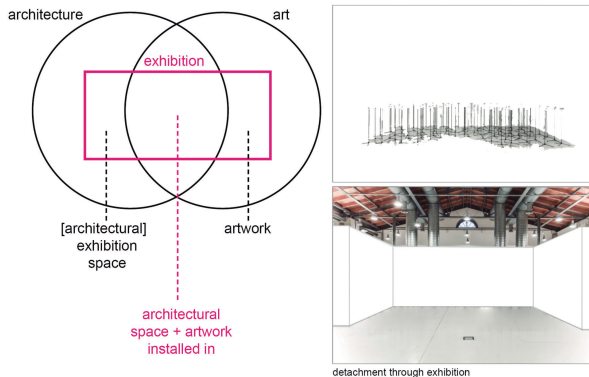
### simulating “cermodern” via architectural photograph at chronicle 707

The process of “simulating” the experiences includes three phases: (1) De-tachment, (2) re-production and (3) re-exhibition, which will further be demonstrated by shared posts on the blog specifically CerModern.

#### exhibition de-tached

Artworks become valued only by being exhibited while architecture becomes visible in an exhibition by its space being the container of the artworks. Therefore, exhibition resides between architecture and art. The relationship between the two could be established by the exhibition phenomenon that is the medium, where [architectural] exhibition space and artwork overlaps.

Temporary exhibitions create temporary spatial situations with changing togetherness of architectural space and artworks installed in. In other words, with each temporary exhibition, architectural space is re-produced. The blog aims to capture and share these temporal situations with photograph.

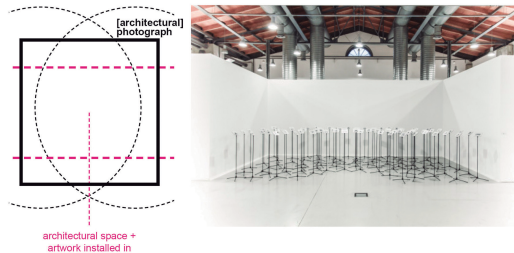


#### f1\_Detachment through exhibition

Schemes and photographs are produced by the authors

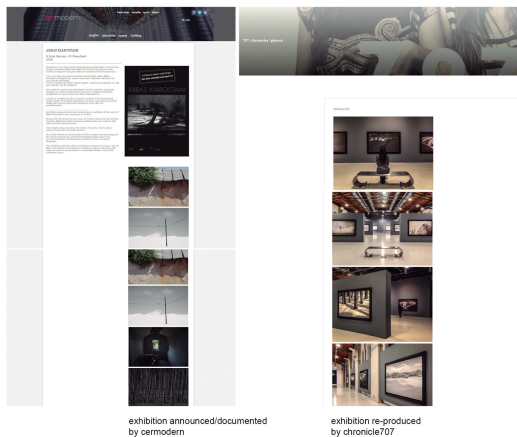
## simulating “cermodern” via photograph: an experiment on the virtual space “chronicle707”

Photograph is considered as a transitory medium where “detachment” from the physical architectural space (its historical, institutional and spatial background) and the artwork (the artist, the market value or production processes), is possible. Photography as an interpretative tool becomes the medium for the “detachment” process and for the creation of a simulation. In our case, referring to the title, simulating “CerModern” means being detached from its physical presence; the photographs captured are no longer promotions or representations, but have a new meaning, and are simulations on their own right (f2).



### f2\_ Exhibition de-tached

This photo is taken at CerModern from the exhibition '*Bir Dünya Hikayesi-Une Histoire du Monde*' by Turkish artist Osman Dinç, <http://chronicle707.com/post/101834461403/>



### f3\_Comparison between CerModern's website and chronicle707

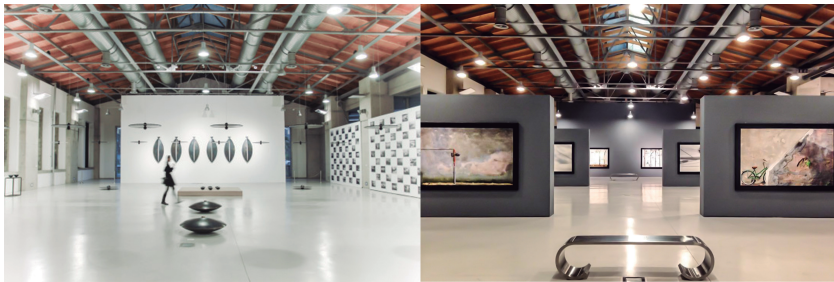
Print screens from CerModern's official website (left) <http://www.cermodern.org/abbas-kiarostami.html>, and Chronicle707 (right) <http://chronicle707.com/post/138789725008/sergiexhibition-abbas-kiarostami-cermodern>

## b. beril kapusuz balcı, bengi su ertürkmen

CerModern as the art institution also uses photographs on virtual media in order to announce forthcoming exhibitions as well as making archives of the previous exhibitions. An introductory text is accompanied with photographs of sole artworks exhibited. Thus in this case, photograph serves as a tool for reproduction that detaches the artwork from the exhibition space. It is important to note that; institution's conception of detachment differs from the authors'. CerModern detaches artworks from their spatial context –which is actually institution's exhibition space. This results in the “loss of *aura*” for both the artwork, architectural space and the exhibition. On the contrary, the authors, while taking “architectural” photographs of the exhibitions do take the exhibition as an entity, considering the artworks inseparable from their exhibition space. Accordingly, each photograph of the exhibition becomes a spatial interpretation or a narration of the exhibition. In this context, for CerModern photographs operate as tools of “documentation” of sole artworks, while for the authors they become tool of “interpretation” of architectural space and “re-productions” of exhibitions (f3).

### exhibition re-produced

The photograph becomes a reality in itself, inscribing a new narration and a new meaning. Composing the photographs on a new post on the blog follows detachment process initiated by photographing the exhibitions. In this way, new assemblage of the photographs generates a new narration of the exhibition. It is what we call the re-production process in which architectural space –that hosts the exhibition– is re-produced via photograph in our architectural point of view.

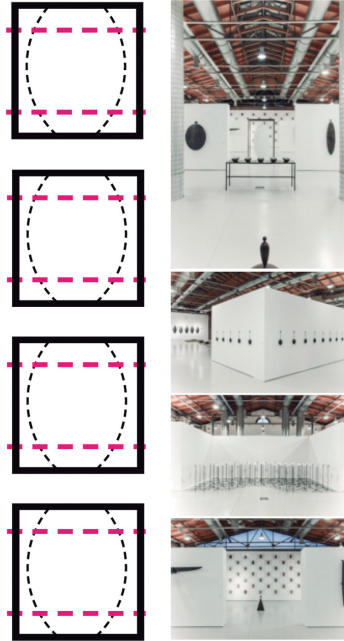


**f4\_Photos taken by the authors, from the same vantage point at CerModern**

Exhibition by Osman Dinç (left), exhibition by Abbas Kiarostami (right)

Exhibition is engaged with the “architectural” photography because a spatial understanding of the photographic composition is necessary. In each exhibition, the photographs as simulations create a new narration. The photographs that are the part of the simulation presented on the blog, implies the architectural space (altered by the artworks installed) together with the artwork (of which meaning has changed due the space it is installed in). In order to analyze the temporal spatial situation (narration) of each exhibition the authors photograph the same architectural space, from the same vantage point (f4). The unique instants of temporary exhibition's spatial relations –reproduced via photographs– are reorganized on the post by the authors. Thus, the exhibition is re-produced in a way the authors' curatorial rearrangement of the photographs.

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assemblage of photographs

**exhibition re-produced**

[architectural] photographs of exhibition  
new [spatial] narration / meaning

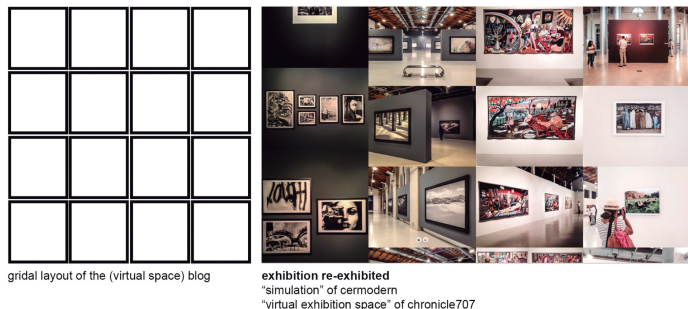
### **f5\_Exhibition re-produced Schemes and photographs**

produced and taken by the authors

At the instant of the publishing, the post introduces a new “text” other than the descriptive text about the exhibition nor the aesthetic aspects/production processes/ market value of the artwork. Also, the post suggests an alternative reading of the architectural space specific to the exhibition.

### **exhibition re-exhibited**

The In the last instance, the separate posts (the re-productions of the exhibitions) are assembled on the blog’s interface, which is defined by the authors as a virtual space. Once the photographs are published on the blog, they become a part of the virtual exhibit, creating a virtual (exhibition) space. Therefore, CerModern’s exhibition space is re-exhibited in the virtual space of the blog chronicle707 among other simulations.



### f6\_Exhibition re-exhibited

Schemes and photographs are produced by the authors. Homepage of chronicle707

"Chronicle" by definition, is a record of events, transactions, or observations kept daily or at frequent intervals, which implies a linear chronology. The blog focuses more on the assemblage of the experiences rather than their chronologic order. Therefore the theme of the blog's layout; the gridal design of the virtual space of the blog (f6) and bringing the photographs side by side without a given order blurs this linearity. On the scale of the separate images, each photograph becomes a reality on its own right; each opens the possibilities of different spatial re-readings on itself. While on the overall view, the-virtual space of chronicle707 creates a new exhibition space via photographs from various exhibitions and environments. In other words, exhibitions are re-exhibited and a new *aura* is created by the multitude of simulations.

### conclusion

The ephemeral quality of temporary exhibitions creates vast number of spatial situations that disappear by the time exhibitions move out. Therefore, the exhibition' engagement with a particular space –how the artworks and the architectural space they inhabit relates– comes with a persistence problem. It is suggested by this paper as a contemplation to the introduced blog chronicle707 that architectural photography specifically is the medium to capture those spatial interactions. Hence, the architectural eye of the authors –as two architects– becomes an integral part of the intention to "interpret" the exhibitions rather than sole documentation.

Among many other blogs, which have become indispensable actors of the social media / virtual space, chronicle707 uses "space" as a metaphor and plays with its meaning. In this context, the virtual space of the blog, tries to create its own *aura* by the act of assembling varying temporal exhibitions. Each exhibition becomes a permanent entity of the ultimate "simulation" –an ever-changing virtual space–.

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### f7\_Exhibition re-exhibited

Homepage of chronicle707, [www.chronicle707.com](http://www.chronicle707.com)

## endnotes

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## **CV**

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